

The Story of the Window Viper:

Excerpted from: *Meirick, Cody “The Story of the Window Viper,” Scary Studies, 2 July 2021.*
<https://www.scarystudies.com/window-viper/#The-Window-Viper-Story>

Originally seen in: Schwartz, Alvin and Stephen Gammell “Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark,” Harper-Trophy 1981.

A widow lived alone on the top floor of an apartment house. One morning, her telephone rang. “Hello,” she said. “This is the viper,” a man said. “I’m coming up.”

“Somebody is fooling around,” she thought, and hung up.

A half-hour later, the telephone rang again. It was the same man. “It’s the viper,” he said. “I’ll be up soon.” The widow didn’t know what to think, but she was getting frightened.

Once more, the telephone rang. Again it was the viper. “I’m coming up now,” he said. She quickly called the police. They said they would be right over. When the doorbell rang, she sighed with relief. “They are here!” she thought.

But when she opened the door, there stood a little old man with a bucket and a cloth. “I am the viper,” he said. “I vish to vash and vipe the windows.”

This story goes back at least to the mid-20th Century, and became circulated even wider in the 1980s after being included in Alvin Schwartz’s Scary Stories books.

As described in *One Potato, Two Potato*, “The purpose of this book is to show how children use their traditional lore to cope with the stresses of their lives and to learn what it means to be a member of a human society”... to me, that’s exactly what a funny scary story can do. It’s a way to introduce fears and even horror themes and tropes, while also alleviating the truly fearful part of it.

Although at a certain point it is important to let children be scared, it is also important for them to also find that sometimes, there is nothing to be afraid of. Something unknown or unexpected isn’t necessarily a monster.

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